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Levels of Centralisation and Autonomy in Russia's "Party of Power:" Cross-Regional Variations

Petr Panov and Cameron Ross

Abstract

The institutionalization and nationalisation of Russia's party system, which is dominated by United Russia (UR), has played a major role in the building of Putin's 'power vertical'. Nevertheless, despite the fact that formal relations within United Russia are highly centralized, informal practices allow for far greater degrees of regional autonomy. Focusing on UR's candidate selection for the 2011 Duma election this paper provides an examination of cross-regional variations in the relations between UR's Party Centre and its regional branches. As electoral legislation requires the segmentation of party lists into "regional groups", the composition of the regional lists, specifically the share of "native candidates", is considered as an indicator of the level of autonomy of regional branches. Ordinal regression analysis confirms our main theoretical hypotheses. In the more financially autonomous regions, UR's regional branches will have more leverage and bargaining power in their relations with the Party Centre. The second influential factor is heterogeneity: the more a region deviates, in one way or another, from the average (all-Russian) indicators, the less the region is subordinate to the Party Centre.

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Introduction

Many authors have noted the impact of federalism on the organisation of political parties. As Biezen and Hopkin note, in multi-level polities 'parties are obliged to interact with their voters in a variety of different ways: as 'national' parties seeking to run the government of the state, as local parties seeking power at the municipal level, and as 'regional' parties seeking to govern a particular territory or nation within the state' (2004, p. 1). Moreover, for Gibson, federal systems, 'through the powers and political resources they impart to political actors located at different points in the federal structure... can shape the nature of party competition, the structures and incentives for politicians, and the decentralization of parties and party systems' (2004, p. 21).

In turn, party organization can also have important consequences for the operation of federal political systems. Strong and cohesive national parties have an important integrative function in federal states binding together the diverse subjects of the federation. However, if parties are over-centralized in their structures and operation and do not reflect the interests of the constituent units this can also lead to tensions and conflict between the Centre and the federal subject, particularly in multi-national federations. Such a situation has now emerged in Russia where regional parties are prohibited, and all of Russia's regional assemblies are dominated by the Kremlin's 'party of power', United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*) (Ross, 2010).

The institutionalization of a new party system has played a significant role in the building of Putin's 'power vertical'. Regional parties, which were prolific in the 1990s, were banned after the adoption of 2001 Federal Law on Political Parties. Moreover, the introduction of proportional representation for regional assembly elections in 2003 has led to the widespread penetration of federal parties into regional legislatures (Golosov 2011). By 2007-8 a new party system with a very high degree of party nationalisation had been created. It is built around one party – United Russia (UR) - which dominates the membership of all regional assemblies (see Gel'man and Ross 2010, Panov 2010, Panov and Ross 2013).

Party building in UR has been characterised by what Panebianco terms ‘territorial penetration from above’ rather than ‘territorial diffusion’ from below (Roberts 2012 p. 176). As Roberts notes, UR relies on what may be termed ‘a centralised party model’ under which regional branches and rank and file members are directly subordinate to the Central Executive Committee and the Party Centre. This ‘pyramid-structured organisation is superimposed over the existing territorial boundaries of the Russian Federation, identical in form from one region to another, with efforts made from the outset to ensure this conformity’ (Ibid, p. 151).

However, the success of the UR’s penetration into the regions has largely been dependent on the support of regional governors and administrations. As the former Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration, Surkov noted in 2006, ‘In the overwhelming majority of regions, UR relies on the incumbent authorities – regional leaders, city mayors, and so on’ (Roberts, 2012, p. 177). Slider also makes the point that, ‘whereas in the past a significant number of Moscow-based politicians had been chosen to head regional party bodies, by late 2008 there had been a marked increase in the number of deputies of regional assemblies (most often the speakers of the assemblies) serving as UR leaders’ (2010, p. 262). Moreover, as Chaisty notes, in 2011 the main recruiting ground for UR candidates to the State *Duma* were members of regional elites. Thus, for example, just under 30 percent of UR candidates held posts in regional executive bodies or were deputies of regional assemblies (2013, p. 10). Consequently, whilst *formal* relations within United Russia are highly centralized, as we shall demonstrate, *informal* relations allow for far greater degrees of regional autonomy. In this study we examine the degree to which regional branches of UR are subordinate to the top party bodies at the centre (hereafter, the “Party Centre”). Are there cross-regional variations? If so, how can these be explained?

Before we turn to examine these issues we start with a brief discussion on how to measure multi-level party organization and what factors influence the level of centralization and autonomy in political parties. We argue that in Russia’s case the candidate selection process is the best indicator for the measurement of cross-regional variations in the relations between UR’s Party

Centre and its regional branches. We then turn to an analysis of candidate selection procedures. We develop a new index – the share of ‘native candidates’ – and provide a comparative study of the composition of UR regional lists for the 2011 Duma Elections. Finally, we test some hypothesis concerning the factors that influence the level of centralization and autonomy within UR.

Intra-Party Centralisation and Regional Autonomy: Measuring and Explanations

Scholars have sought to measure levels of intra-party centralisation and regional autonomy by examining the powers of regional party branches over: 1) selection of the party leaders; 2) involvement of regional branches in the central party executive; 3) selection of candidates for elections; 4) adoption of party manifestos and programmes; 5) amending the constitution of the party; 6) control over their local party finances (see for example, studies by Fabre 2011, Katz 2001, and Thorlakson 2013). However, problems of gaining access to the necessary research materials and data in Russia, has made it impossible for us to examine all these aspects of centralisation/autonomy in our study of UR. In this article we focus on the degree of autonomy which regional party leaders are able to maintain over the selection of candidates to the State *Duma*. This is an area where we have been able to access reliable data for all the regional branches of UR.

As William Cross notes, ‘candidate selection is one of the central functions of political parties’ (2008, p. 597). Candidate nomination has also become an important test of the internal democratic strength of party organizations. Thus, for example, Gallagher (1988, p. 1) has argued that ‘the way in which political parties select their candidates may be used as an acid test of how democratically they conduct their internal affairs’, and candidate selection for Katz, is ‘one of the central defining functions of a political party in a democracy’ (2001, p. 278). According to Rahat and Hazan, candidate selection systems vary according to four dimensions: ‘1) candidacy, i.e., possible restrictions on the eligibility for candidacy, 2) party selectorates, i.e., inclusiveness versus exclusiveness of the selectorate in the selection process, 3) decentralization, i.e., the locus of

control; and 4) voting/appointment systems, i.e., how candidates are nominated' (2001, pp. 297–9).

The method employed to select candidates is a good barometer of the degree to which a party organisation is centralised or decentralised (Lundell, 2004). Thus, for example, 'candidates might, at one extreme, be selected in primaries open for all eligible voters; at the other, they can be picked by the party leader alone. Other possibilities are selection by all party members in the constituency; by delegates at local conventions; by a constituency committee; by the regional organization; by national organs or by a few national faction leaders' (Gallagher 1988, p. 1). In addition, Norris alerts us to another important dimension, namely the degree of institutionalization (formal/informal) in the selection process. As she observes (1996, p. 324), 'In formal systems, the selection process is characterized by detailed, explicit and standardized rules which are relatively clear to outside observers, whereas an informal selection process is less bureaucratic and rarely made explicit', which is very much the case in the Russian Federation.

Federalism and Party Centralisation

Deschouwer (2005, p. 22) stresses four features of federalism that impact on a party's organisation: 1) the interconnectedness of the level of a federal political system; 2) the degree of autonomy of the regions; 3) the degree of asymmetry of the federation; 4) the homogeneity/heterogeneity of society. In this light, it is important to remember that Russia is the largest multinational federation in the world. However, the Russian polity does not operate according to the classic principles of federalism. Since the inauguration of Vladimir Putin as Russian President in 2000, federalism has come under attack as the President has sought to create a highly centralised form of rule - a "power vertical" stretching from the Kremlin to the grass roots (see Ross 2010, Gel'man and Ryzhenkov 2011). Moreover, behind the formal veneer of constitutionalism and the rule of law, an important aspect of intergovernmental relations in Russia are the myriad of informal relations which operate between political and economic elites at the centre and in the regions. The Russian Federation is also highly asymmetric. The current 85 federal subjects vary widely in the

size of their territories and populations, and their socio-economic status and their ethnic composition.¹

Relations between members of the top leadership of UR and members of the regional branches will often be conducted through informal channels behind closed doors, and different regions will exercise different levels of leverage. Thus, for example, such factors as the size of the regions, their industrial base and economic power, their patronage ties to the central Party leadership, and the number of UR party members (which varied in 2010 from 8000 in the Republic of Adygeya to 128,000 in Tatarstan), will play an important role in determining the relations between the party's regional branches and the central leadership.

Candidate Selection in United Russia

Formally candidate selection procedures in UR are highly centralized. Candidate nominations for Federal elections are made by the Party Congress which according to article 8.3.1 of the UR's Charter is the supreme authority in the party. According to article 8.3.4 the Congress has the powers to make decisions on all aspects of internal party affairs, including the reorganization of the party's structure, the abolition of regional departments and other local branches of the party. Delegates to the Congress also vote in secret ballot for the final list of candidates for elections to the State *Duma*. Moreover, UR central bodies (the General Council and the Presidium of the General Council) are of great importance in candidate nominations for sub-national elections. Although candidates for regional legislatures, governors and mayors of regional capitals are nominated by conferences of UR's regional branches, all these decisions have to be endorsed by the Party Centre (Article 13.7.7 of UR's Charter).²

¹ Our study does not include the two new federal subjects which became part of the Russian Federation with the accession of Crimea in March 2014 and which raised the number of federal subjects from 83 to 85.

² UR's Charter, available at: <http://er.ru/party/rules/#13>, accessed 8 May 2014.

However, the formal rules of endorsement do not mean that the Party Centre exercises total control over all sub-national elections. In actual fact, the Party Centre is only able to control some of the nominations, leaving the rest to the discretion of the regional branches. Consequently, the actual degree of centralization of candidate selection for regional elections differs greatly across the federation. However, as the process of nominating candidates is informal in nature, there are no reliable statistics that we can employ to conduct a comparative study of candidate nominations at the regional level. Moreover, since regional elections are held at different times, the influence of contextual factors (e.g., the current political situation) would distort the results of such an analysis. For these reasons it makes much more sense to examine the levels of centralization of candidate nominations for elections at the national level where we have much more reliable data.

The process of candidate selection for *Duma* elections differs from that laid down in the formal party rules. Specifically, although candidate nomination for federal elections is the exclusive responsibility of the Party Centre, in actual fact, regional branches take an active part in this process. An important factor here, are some of the special features of the Russian electoral system. In 2011 as well as in 2007, all the deputies in the State *Duma* were elected in PR party list contests and all of the seats were allocated to a single Federal electoral district. Russian electoral legislation requires that the total number of candidates included in the list should not exceed 600. The federal part of the list of candidates must not exceed 10 candidates. All other candidates must be divided between ‘regional lists’ that are made up of ‘groups of candidates which correspond to, ‘a subject of the Russian Federation, groups of subjects of the Russian Federation, or a part of the territory of a subject of the Russian Federation.’ The number of regional groups of candidates must not be less than seventy.³

³ The Federal Law on the Election on Deputies of the State *Duma* of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. Ch.6, available at: <http://cikrf.ru/eng/law/FL-51-FZ.html>, accessed 8 May 2014.

There are a number of positive reasons for this ‘segmentation’ of the party lists. Firstly, this helps to bring deputies closer to their voters and constituents. The adoption of a single electoral district has the disadvantage of producing a single electoral constituency with an extremely high ‘district magnitude’ of 450, and this impedes the interaction of deputies and their voters. Splitting party list into regional groups is intended to alleviate this problem.

The second reason is to encourage regional politicians to participate more actively in election campaigns. The creation of regional groups means that the number of seats which each regional branch of UR receives will depend on the number of votes that are cast for UR in a particular region.

Finally, this rule is very advantageous to UR as it allows the party to utilize the powers of its regional governors in election campaigns. As Golosov notes (2013), regional governors have been made directly responsible for the election results of the ‘party of power’ in federal elections, and likewise Reuter and Robertson (2012) have found strong and consistent evidence that appointment patterns are primarily influenced by the degree to which UR branches perform (and over-perform) their duties of ‘bringing home the votes,’ and similar findings have been confirmed by Reisinger and Moraski (2013).

At the same time, the ‘segmented’ party list provides regional politicians with new opportunities. Since they are responsible for the results of their regional groups, they will strive to influence who is nominated to the lists, and they will also expect to be rewarded for the ‘positive results’ obtained by their nominees. Consequently, in drawing up its party lists, the Party Centre will often have to share its decision-making powers with its regional branches. Such a sharing of powers will be *informal*, as the formal rules governing candidate nomination give such powers exclusively to the Party Congress. Hence, the composition of regional party lists will depend on the informal relations that exist between the Party Centre and regional branches.

Both sides will pursue their own interests and push for the nomination of their preferred candidates. Regional party elites will strive to promote their own ‘native candidates.’ The Party

Centre has to take into account the interests of regional branches, but it will also have its own candidates – officials and top bureaucrats loyal to the government, incumbents, businessmen, NGO's leaders, famous public figures (actors, sportsmen), etc. However, since the Party Centre does not have its 'own list', these candidates have to be included in the regional party lists.

Consequently, the final composition of the regional lists will thus often be the result of a compromise between the Party Centre and the regional branches. The extent to which the Party Centre is able to impose its candidates on a particular regional list will reflect the specific power relations between the Party Centre and the regional branches. Consequently, the share of 'native candidates' in regional party lists for elections to the State *Duma* may be considered as a good proxy for the measurement of the degree of subordination of regional branches to the Party Centre.

In some cases the party will impose its "outsider" candidates (*Vikings*) onto a region's party list. Thus, for example in 2011 Vladimir Pekhtin failed to regain his place on the Party List in Primorsky *Krai* and the Party Centre posted him to Arkhangelsk *Oblast'* where he was an outsider with no previous experience of working in the region.⁴ In other case, as we shall discuss below, native candidates will win out over outsiders.

'Native Candidates' in UR's Regional Lists for the 2011 Duma Elections

The rules governing the selection of candidates for the 2011 *Duma* elections were slightly different to those in operation for the 2007 *Duma* elections. In 2009 delegates to the XI United Party Congress ruled that internal party voting (primaries) could be used to select candidates⁵. In

⁴ See, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/polit/1435419.html#ixzz3RyYSMuki>, accessed 15 February 2015.

⁵ One more special feature of UR's election campaign has to be mentioned. On the eve of 2011 *Duma* elections the 'All-Russian People's Front' was founded by the Kremlin. The Front was created to help bolster the flagging electoral support of the 'party of power'. As the Front does not have the official status of a political party, it is not permitted to stand in elections. However it was

the run up to elections for the State *Duma* in 2011 over 4700 candidates competed in UR primaries. At first sight it may appear that primaries serve as additional proof for the thesis that regional branches take an active part in candidate selection. However, it is important to stress that UR's Charter does not oblige the party to be bound by the results of the primaries. In total one fifth of the winners of the primaries subsequently failed to achieve a place on the regional party lists. For example, in Stavropol region the will of the electorate was completely ignored when none of the winners of the regional primaries were given a place on the Party List. The first five places on the regional list were taken by the Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin (who did not participate in the primaries), the Military Commissar Yuri Em (who did not participate in the primaries), Andrey Murga, President of the Stavropol *Krai* Chamber of Commerce (ranked 7th in the primaries), State Duma deputy Stanislav Govorukhin (ranked 6th in the primaries), the General Director of the Centre for Metrology and Standardization, Valery Zerenkov (also did not participate in the primaries). In Perm region one of the winners of the primaries was the billionaire Anatoly Lomakin (Director of the Joint Stock Company, International Potash), who was a sponsor of the local branch of UR. But in the Party list he was placed fifth. The top places on the list went to the Russian Minister of Natural Resources Yuri Trutnev, followed by Duma deputies Valery Trapeznikov and Andrei Klimov, and the TV presenter Alexei Pushkov (none of whom participated in the primaries).⁶

In accordance with electoral legislation, UR drew up a party list of 597 candidates in 2011. The only person, who was included in the Federal part of the list, was President Medvedev. The

decided that UR would include representatives of the Front in its party lists. In total, the Front was given 185 places. The inclusion of members of the Front did not change the fundamentals of the bargaining process between the Party Centre and regional branches which is the focus of this study.

⁶ <http://www.mk.ru/politics/article/2011/09/28/627919-blizhe-k-telu-damyi-i-gospoda.html>, accessed 8 May 2014.

remaining 596 candidates were divided into 80 regional lists. In 2007, UR's party list of 600 candidates was also headed by one person (President Putin) and it was divided into 83 regional groups. As a rule, both in 2007 and 2011 each of the regional groups corresponded to a 'subject of the Russian Federation', with the exception of three small federal subjects (the Nenets Autonomous District was included in the list of Arkhangelsk *Oblast'*; the Jewish Autonomous *Okrug* in Khabarovsk *Krai*, and Chukotka in Magadan *Oblast'*). In 2007, there was more than one regional list in two regions (2 lists in Voronezh *Oblast'* and 3 lists in Volgograd *Oblast'*).

Since Russian regions have significant variations in the size of their populations, there are also wide variations in the number of candidates in regional party lists: in 2007 these varied from 4 to 27, and in 2011 they ranged from 3 to 30. The distribution of seats between regional lists has also been very uneven: between 1 (Magadan *Oblast'*⁷) and 15 (Bashkortostan and Moscow) in 2007; and between 0 (Magadan *Oblast'* and Altai Republic⁸) and 15 (Moscow) in 2011.

In order to distinguish 'native candidates' from 'non-native' candidates (the so-called *Vikings*) in regional lists, we have analysed the biographies of each candidate, and in particular their current position and career trajectory.⁹ We classify those candidates who worked in their regions in 2011 ("current position") as 'native', independent of their place of birth or career trajectory. We also classified as 'native candidates' those individuals who were born and began their careers in the regions which nominated them, even in those cases where they did not work in

⁷ The Magadan regional list should not have been given a mandate, but Putin transferred his mandate to this group.

⁸ Kamchatka also initially failed to receive a mandate, but Medvedev transferred his mandate to this group.

⁹ The data are from the Federal party list of United Russia which is officially registered by the Central Election Commission, available at:

http://www.cikrf.ru/law/decrees_of_cec/2011/10/18/Zp11392.html, accessed 8 May 2014.

the regions at the time of the election in 2011. If candidates spent part of their careers in the regions where they were nominated, but this was not at the beginning of their careers or their current posts at the time of the election, they were not classified as ‘native candidates’.¹⁰

Applying this set of rules, we have divided all candidates into ‘native candidates’ and *Vikings*. In total (if we don’t take into account Medvedev as the only candidate in the all-federal part of the list), there were 484 ‘native candidates’ (81.2%) and 112 *Vikings* among the 596 persons included in UR’s party list. It is noteworthy that among incumbents the share of ‘native candidates’ is smaller. Of the 171 incumbents, 109 are ‘native candidates’ (63.7%).

The shares of ‘native candidates’ in each regional list are presented in Table 1. The index has values ranging from ‘0’ to ‘1’.

¹⁰ Special rules have to be applied for incumbents, i.e., those candidates who were deputies of the *Duma* in 2011 and were included in UR’s party list. It is interesting to note that there were 171 such individuals among the 597 members of UR’s party list. UR had 315 *Duma* deputies in 2011, which means that 144 incumbents were not reselected. Since most incumbents currently live and work in Moscow, their current posts cannot be taken as a sign of their identification as ‘natives’ or ‘Vikings’, therefore, we focus on their posts at the point when they were first elected to the *Duma*. An incumbent is defined as a ‘native candidate’ if she/he lived in the region or at least had a strong connections (for example, business links) with the region at the time of their elections. Otherwise, we consider them as ‘Vikings’, even if they were elected from their region many times.

Table 1. Results of UR's Regional Lists and Shares of 'Native Candidates'

	2007			2011				2011: Share of 'native candidates'		
	UR vote	Candid ates in list	Manda tes won	UR vote	Candid ates in list	Manda tes won	Diff in mandat es	all list	winning positions	elected candid.
Adygeya	0.7097	4	1	0.6021	4	1	0	0.7500	1.0000	1.0000
Altay rep.	0.6946	4	1	0.5333	3	0	-1	1.0000	1.0000	n/a
Altay <i>Krai</i>	0.5469	9	5	0.3717	10	3	-2	0.7000	0.4000	0.6667
Amur	0.6975	6	2	0.4353	5	1	-1	0.6000	0.5000	0.0000
Archangelsk	0.5672	5	2	0.3190	5	1	-1	0.6000	0.5000	0.0000
Astrakhan	0.5801	5	2	0.6017	4	2	0	0.7500	0.5000	0.5000
Bashkortostan	0.8312	15	15	0.7050	17	12	-3	0.8235	0.8000	0.7500
Belgorod	0.6539	7	4	0.5116	7	3	-1	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Bryansk	0.6177	4	3	0.5012	4	2	-1	0.7500	0.6667	0.5000
Buryatiya	0.6559	5	2	0.4902	5	1	-1	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Vladimir	0.5675	6	3	0.3827	8	2	-1	0.6250	0.6667	0.5000
Volgograd	0.5774	13*	5*	0.3548	10	3	-2	0.6000	0.6000	0.6667
Vologda	0.6047	5	3	0.3340	5	1	-2	0.8000	0.6667	1.0000
Voronezh	0.5697	8*	5*	0.5005	9	5	0	0.6667	0.4000	0.4000
Dagestan	0.8919	10	8	0.9144	14	10	2	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Zabaikal'skii <i>Krai</i>	0.6275	6	2	0.4328	5	1	-1	0.8000	0.5000	0.0000
Ivanovo	0.6076	6	2	0.4012	6	1	-1	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Ingushetiya	0.9872	4	1	0.9096	3	1	0	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Irkutsk	0.5869	8	5	0.3493	8	2	-3	0.8750	1.0000	1.0000
Kabardino-Balkariya	0.9612	4	3	0.8191	4	3	0	0.7500	0.6667	0.6667
Kaliningrad	0.5738	6	3	0.3707	7	3	0	0.5714	0.3333	0.3333
Kalmykiya	0.7270	4	1	0.6610	3	1	0	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Kaluga	0.6165	7	2	0.4042	5	1	-1	0.6000	0.0000	0.0000
Kamchatka	0.6835	4	1	0.4525	3	1**	0	0.6667	0.0000	0.0000
Karach.-Cherkessiya	0.9290	4	2	0.8984	4	2	0	0.7500	0.5000	0.5000

Kareliya	0.5728	4	1	0.3226	3	1	0	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Kemerovo	0.7686	11	9	0.6424	11	7	-2	0.7273	0.6667	0.7143
Kirov	0.5538	5	3	0.3490	5	2	-1	0.8000	0.6667	0.5000
Komi	0.6206	4	2	0.5881	4	2	0	0.7500	1.0000	1.0000
Kostroma	0.5635	4	1	0.3074	4	1	0	0.7500	0.0000	0.0000
Krasnodar	0.6189	15	11	0.5615	19	11	0	0.8421	0.7273	0.7273
Krasnoyarsk	0.6067	9	5	0.3670	10	3	-2	0.8000	0.8000	0.6667
Kurgan	0.6443	6	2	0.4441	5	1	-1	0.8000	0.5000	1.0000
Kursk	0.6274	6	3	0.4572	6	2	-1	0.8333	0.6667	0.5000
Leningrad <i>Oblast'</i>	0.5923	5	3	0.3354	8	2	-1	0.7500	1.0000	0.5000
Lipetsk	0.6230	6	3	0.4009	6	2	-1	0.8333	0.6667	0.5000
Magadan	0.5524	4	1**	0.4104	3	0	-1	0.6667	1.0000	n/a
Marii El	0.6754	4	2	0.5224	4	1	-1	0.7500	0.5000	0.0000
Mordoviya	0.9341	7	4	0.9162	6	4	0	0.6667	0.5000	0.5000
Moscow	0.5415	27	15	0.4662	30	15	0	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Moscow <i>Oblast'</i>	0.5976	22	14	0.3310	24	7	-7	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Murmansk	0.5511	5	2	0.3202	5	1	-1	0.6000	0.5000	0.0000
Nizhegorod <i>Oblast'</i>	0.6063	13	7	0.4455	11	5	-2	0.6364	0.4286	0.2000
Novgorod	0.6313	5	2	0.3458	3	1	-1	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Novosibirsk	0.5907	10	5	0.3384	10	3	-2	0.8000	0.8000	1.0000
Omsk	0.6014	9	4	0.3961	8	3	-1	0.7500	0.5000	0.3333
Orenburg	0.6031	8	4	0.3489	8	2	-2	0.7500	0.5000	0.0000
Oryol	0.5985	5	2	0.3899	5	1	-1	0.6000	0.0000	0.0000
Penza	0.7031	6	4	0.5630	6	3	-1	0.6667	0.7500	0.6667
Perm	0.6206	10	5	0.3628	10	3	-2	0.7000	0.6000	0.6667
Primorsky <i>Krai</i>	0.5487	6	3	0.3299	6	2	-1	0.6667	0.6667	0.5000
Pskov	0.5673	6	2	0.3665	5	1	-1	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Rostov	0.7190	13	11	0.5022	13	7	-4	0.7692	0.7273	0.5714
Ryazan	0.5710	7	2	0.3979	7	2	0	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Samara	0.5608	11	5	0.3937	12	4	-1	0.7500	0.6000	0.5000

St Petersburg	0.5033	19	7	0.3535	16	5	-2	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Saratov	0.6481	10	6	0.6489	12	6	0	0.9167	0.8333	0.8333
Sakhalin	0.6296	4	1	0.4191	4	1	0	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Sverdlovsk <i>Oblast'</i>	0.6204	11	9	0.3271	11	4	-5	0.9091	0.8889	0.7500
North Ossetiya	0.7178	4	1	0.6790	4	2	1	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Smolensk	0.5392	4	2	0.3623	4	1	-1	0.7500	0.5000	0.0000
Stavropol	0.6220	9	5	0.4911	9	4	-1	0.7778	0.8000	0.7500
Tambov	0.5979	5	2	0.6666	5	3	1	0.6000	0.0000	0.3333
Tatarstan	0.8107	18	14	0.7783	18	13	-1	0.8889	0.8571	0.8462
Tver	0.5971	7	3	0.3844	6	2	-1	0.8333	0.6667	0.5000
Tomsk	0.5841	6	2	0.3751	5	1	-1	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Tula	0.6172	7	3	0.6132	8	4	1	0.5000	0.3333	0.5000
Tuva	0.8900	4	1	0.8529	4	1	0	0.7500	1.0000	1.0000
Tyumen	0.7357	6	4	0.6221	6	4	0	0.8333	0.7500	0.7500
Udmurtiya	0.6057	6	3	0.4509	5	2	-1	0.6000	0.3333	0.0000
Ulyanovsk	0.6624	7	3	0.4356	7	2	-1	0.4286	0.3333	0.0000
Khabarovsk	0.6067	8	3	0.3814	6	2	-1	0.8333	0.6667	0.5000
Khakasiya	0.5953	4	1	0.4013	4	1	0	0.7500	0.0000	0.0000
Khanty-Mansi AO	0.6595	6	3	0.4101	6	2	-1	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Chelyabinsk	0.6111	11	8	0.5028	12	6	-2	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Chechnya	0.9936	6	4	0.9948	7	4	0	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Chuvashiya	0.6227	7	3	0.4342	7	2	-1	0.7143	0.6667	0.5000
Yakutiya	0.6399	5	2	0.4916	5	1	-1	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Yamalo-Nenets AO	0.7935	5	2	0.7168	4	2	0	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Yaroslavl	0.5317	8	3	0.2904	6	1	-2	0.6667	0.6667	1.0000

* There were 3 regional lists in Volgograd and 2 in Voronezh. Figures are summarized. Volgograd: 13 =

4+5+4 for candidates and 5 = 1+2+2 for mandates. Voronezh: 8 = 4+4 for candidates and 5 = 2+3 for mandates.

** The Magadan list in 2007 and Kamchatka list in 2011 didn't win any mandates, but Putin and Medvedev transferred their *Duma* seats to them.

However, the share of ‘native candidates’ in a regional list is not a good enough indicator on its own to measure the degree of centralization/autonomy within UR. The Russian PR electoral system calls for ‘closed party lists’, thus not all positions in the lists are equally important. Specifically, candidates with positions in the lower part of the lists will have little or no chance of winning a mandate. So we need to separate out those candidates who hold ‘winning positions’ (*‘prochodnye’* candidates). Although the winning positions are decided after the elections, the approximate chance of a candidate winning can be calculated in advance. When the party leadership is drawing up its list of candidates it will have a reasonable idea of how many seats it expects to win in each list. The personal distribution of positions within each of the lists will be made in accordance with this calculation. Thus, for example, it makes no sense for the Party Centre to promote its ‘own candidates’ to positions at the lower end of the regional lists, as they will have little chance of being elected. For these reasons, we would argue that it makes more sense in this study to calculate the share of ‘native candidates’ as a percentage of the number of ‘winning positions’ in regional lists, rather than as a percentage of the total number of candidates.

In order to define what positions are ‘winning positions’, we used the results of the previous election. As was noted above, the composition of UR’s party lists in 2007 and 2011 were almost the same and this allows us to juxtapose the results of 2007 elections and regional party lists in 2011.¹¹ The assumption is quite simple: we assume that UR’s results in the 2007 elections were extraordinary high, and it is unlikely that in 2011 the UR leadership (both central and regional bodies) could hope for a better result than it achieved in 2007. On the other hand, there is no reason to suggest that UR leaders expected losses. They would in all likelihood expect the same results as in 2007. Therefore we presume that if UR party leaders based their calculations on the most optimistic forecast, they would expect the number of winning positions in a region to be equal to

¹¹ In two regions (Voronezh and Volgograd *oblasts*), where there was more than one regional list in 2007, we have summed the results of these lists.

the number of seats that the region won in 2007.¹² Hence, we use the 2007 elections results (the distribution of UR's mandates between regional lists) in order to distinguish the 'winning positions' in the 2011 regional lists.¹³

However, we have to take into account one special feature of Russian electoral legislation. Deputies elected to the State *Duma* have the right to refuse their mandates after the conclusion of the election and in these cases their seats are passed on to other members on the regional party lists).¹⁴ This feature has given birth to the widespread practice of parties placing well-known politicians or celebrities ('*locomotives*') at the top of their lists in order to boost their electoral chances. But some of these '*locomotives*' have no intention of taking up their seats and therefore we should not consider them as winning: thus we do not count these when we come to analyse the

¹² This assumption is confirmed indirectly by the actual distribution of seats between regional lists in 2011. As is well known, the elections results for UR in 2011 were significantly worse than in 2007. While in 2007 UR won 315 seats, in 2011 this fell to 238. In general, the losses of the party were distributed fairly evenly between regions. 48 regional lists lost one or two seats in comparison to 2007. 23 regions received the same number of seats as in 2007. Only 4 regions (Dagestan, North Ossetiya, Tambov and Tula *oblasts*) received more seats than in 2007.

¹³ Magadan's regional list received no mandates. However, Putin who was number 1 in UR's party list, transferred his mandate to the Magadan regional group. Therefore we count Magadan list as having one winning position.

¹⁴ Art. 83 of the Law on State *Duma* Elections notes that in the case of a refusal, the mandate is passed on to the next person in the regional group and article Article 89 notes that in the case of early termination of office, the mandate is passed on to the person from the same regional group, not necessarily the next person down on the list ('The Federal Law on the Election on Deputies of the State *Duma* of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation', available at: <http://cikrf.ru/eng/law/FL-51-FZ.html>, accessed 8 May 2014).

composition of the winning positions. The main criteria we employ here are based on the *expectations* concerning a candidate's intentions when they were nominated, not on the results. We suppose that such expectations are invoked by the current status of the candidate – '*locomotive*'. Thus, if a candidate is a high ranking regional official (governor, head of regional governments, chair of regional legislatures), a common expectation emerges that she/he will refuse the mandate after the elections.¹⁵

In 2011 there were 9 cases when regional lists were headed by high level federal officials: Vice prime-ministers - Zubkov, Zhukov, Shuvalov, Kozak, Volodin, Sechin; Federal ministers - Shoigu, Trutnev; and Chief of the Presidential Administration Naryshkin.¹⁶ It has to be noted that Naryshkin and Zhukov did not refuse their mandates and took up the posts of Chair and First Deputy Chair of the State *Duma*, respectively. However, even if these decisions were taken in advance, they were not made public. It was expected that both these politicians would refuse their mandates.

At the same time, there were also some cases where well-known politician – incumbents played the role of *locomotives*. However, unlike government officials, they were expected to continue their work in the *Duma*. Therefore, despite the fact that there were some exceptions (the

¹⁵ The inclusion of governors at the top of regional lists was the most common practice in the *Duma* elections (54 cases in 2011). Governors were usually granted the first position in regional lists although there were some exceptions to the rule (e.g., in Kaliningrad and Tula). The only case when a high regional official did not refuse his mandate was the Governor of Vologda *Oblast'*, Pozgalev.

¹⁶ Three of these officials (Volodin, Kozak, and Trutnev) were nominated in those regions where they began their careers – Saratov, Perm, and St. Petersburg, respectively. Therefore they were considered as 'native candidates'.

former Chairman of *Duma* Gryzlov, for example, refused his mandate) there is no reason not to take these officials into account when defining winning positions.¹⁷

In sum, what is most important here is whether candidates were more likely to have been perceived as those who would refuse their mandates at the time when they were nominated. Thus, we do not take very senior federal and regional officials (e.g., governors) into account when defining the ‘winning positions.’¹⁸ All other administrative posts such as regional ministers, deputies of regional legislatures, mayors (including mayors of regional capitals) as well as incumbents are treated as ‘ordinary’ candidates, although some of these people (as well as many individuals who had no official posts) refused their mandates after the elections.

In light of the above discussion we calculated the share of ‘native candidates’ in winning positions in the regional lists (see Table 1). In total there were 315 winning positions which were the same as the number of seats UR won in 2007. The share of ‘native candidates’ in the winning positions was 74.3% (234 persons). This is, as would be expected, less than the share of ‘native candidates’ among all of the candidates (81.2%).

Finally, it is possible to count the share of ‘native candidates’ among the 238 who were elected (see Table 1). Notably, the share of ‘native candidates’ decreased again - to 70.2% (167 persons), although they were still in a majority. Nevertheless, the share of ‘native candidates elected’ is interesting just for comparison and is not a good indicator of the degree of centralization and autonomy within UR.

As regard incumbents, generally they had more promising positions than the other candidates. Out of 171 incumbents, 143 (83.6%) were in winning positions; and 121 were elected. Interestingly, the ‘Viking incumbents’ were more successful than ‘native incumbents’. 53 out of

¹⁸ The only exception is Novgorod *Oblast*. The regional list here consisted of only 3 candidates and included the Governor and Chair of the regional legislature; but there were 2 winning positions. That is why we consider the Chair of the regional legislature as a winning position.

62 ‘Viking incumbents’ were in winning positions (85.6%); and 47 were elected (75.8%). Among the 109 ‘native incumbents’ only 90 were in winning positions (82.56%); and 74 were elected (67.9%).

In order to measure the degree of subordination of regional branches to the UR Party Centre we calculated an index which measures the share of ‘native candidates’ who were given winning positions in regional party lists. In total there were 234 ‘native candidates’ and 81 *Vikings*, including 90 and 53 incumbents respectively. It seems to be no accident that most of the *Vikings* (53 out of 81) were incumbents. Usually these were politicians who realized that without the support of the Party Centre they would have little chance of securing one of the winning positions. It is striking, that almost all of the nominations from the Party Centre (47 out of 53) were subsequently elected. Since the election results for UR were worse in 2011 than expected, in some cases regional branches were forced to sacrifice their candidates, forcing them to refuse their mandates, in order to allow the ‘Viking’ incumbents to take their places in the *Duma*.

Nonetheless, our study demonstrates that there are enormous differences in the share of ‘native candidates’ in the different regions. Whilst in 28 regions all of the winning positions were occupied by ‘native candidates’, in 6 regions all the winning positions were occupied by *Vikings*.

What Factors Influence on the Level of Centralization and Autonomy within UR

Our independent variables have been drawn from the theoretical literature on parties in multi-level polities (see Stepan 2004, Biezen and Hopkin 2004, Gibson 2004, Deschouwer 2005, Thorlakson 2013). The following list of variables has been selected to explain the cross-regional variations in candidate selection which we discussed above:

1. The formal constitutional status of the federal units. Before the accession of Crimea in March 2014, there were 83 federal subjects¹⁹ - 46 *oblasts*, 9 *krais*, 21 republics, 4 autonomous *okrugs*, 1 autonomous *Oblast'* and 2 federal cities. The Russian Federation is constitutionally asymmetrical. Whilst article 5.4 declares that all subjects of the federation are equal, some are clearly more equal than others. In fact there are three distinct classifications of 'federal subject' specified in the Constitution. Firstly, the twenty one ethnically based republics which are classified as 'national-state formations'. Secondly, *krais* and *oblasts*, which are classified as 'administrative-territorial formations'; and thirdly, autonomous *oblasts* and autonomous *okrugs* defined as 'national-territorial formations'. Only the republics are defined as 'states' (Article 5.2) with the right to their own constitutions, languages, flags, hymns and other trappings of statehood (see Ross, 2002). Leaving aside the debate over the legal interpretation of these constitutional contradictions, we included 'formal status' as an independent variable to test whether it influences the degree of UR's intra-party centralisation. Russia's 21 ethnic republics were coded as '1'; all the other federal units – '0'.

2. Financial autonomy of the regions. Since the 2000s the budget system of Russia has become much more centralized than was the case in the 1990s. At the present time more than 60% of revenues are concentrated at the federal level. However, the Federal Centre distributes a substantial amount of funds to the regions through various types of fiscal transfers (see Alexeev and Kurlyandskaya 2003, Treisman 1996, Marques, Nazrullaeva and Yakovlev 2012). Moreover, Russian regions vary greatly in their financial dependency/autonomy from the Centre. Since UR as a 'party of power' is embedded in the administrative system, there is a good reason to suggest that the degree of financial autonomy of a federal subject will influence its relations with the Party Centre. Thus, for example, rich 'donor subjects' (regions which pay more taxes to the federal

¹⁹ As noted above, this study does not include the two new federal subjects that became part of the Russian Federation with the accession of Crimea in March 2014.

budget than they receive back) have been more successful in carving out higher levels of political autonomy than the impoverished ‘recipient regions’ who depend on federal transfers from the centre for their economic survival. Financial autonomy is measured by the share of federal transfers in regional budgets.²⁰

3. Heterogeneity. It is well-known that Russian regions differ from each other greatly in their economic, demographic and social indices. It is natural to assume that the UR leadership will take such factors into account in conducting its relations with regional branches. Hypothetically, the more a region deviates, in one way or another, from the average (all-Russian) indicators, the less the region is likely to be subordinated by the Party Centre. In this analysis we test the most common variables of regional distinctiveness:

- the logarithm of GRP per capita (deviation from national average)²¹
- the share of the urban population (deviation from national average)²²
- the share of ethnic Russians in the population (deviation from national average)²³

²⁰ We used the data for 2011 which can be found in, *Regiony Rossii: Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskie Pokazateli 2012* (Moskva: Rosstat, 2013).

²¹ Calculated on the basis of GRP per capita in 2010, *Regiony Rossii: Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskie Pokazateli 2012* (Moskva: Rosstat, 2013). Table 11.2. It is necessary to note that the Russian State Statistic Service does not record the GRP of autonomous *Okrugs* (AO). Therefore, Khanty-Mansiisk AO and Yamalo-Nenets AO are not included in the analysis.

²² Calculated on the basis of the share of urban population in 2010: *Regiony Rossii: Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskie Pokazateli 2011* (Moskva: Rosstat, 2012).

²³ Calculated on the basis of the share of ethnic Russians in the population, *Vserossiiskaya Perepis’ Naseleniya 2010*. Table ‘National composition of the RF population’, available at: http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/perepis_itogi1612.htm. Accessed 8 May 2014.

4. Governors. Alongside the above propositions which have been drawn from the theoretical literature on parties in multi-level polities we also test a number of hypothesis that are drawn from the specific features of the Russian political system. In particular, these concern the role of senior regional officials – the governors (see Blakkisrud 2011, Goode 2007, Reuter 2010). During the period 2005-12 when gubernatorial elections were abolished, regional governor were appointed by the President (formally subject to confirmation by the regional legislatures). Nevertheless, it would be an exaggeration to consider governors as simply agents of the federal Centre. Whilst governors perform their functions within Putin's hierarchical system (the 'power vertical'), this has not prevented them from playing an important role as mediators between the Centre and regional elites. Governors have taken an active part in the candidate selection for *Duma* elections and in many cases they have pushed for the nomination of native candidates. The success of a governor in getting their candidates nominated will depend on two key factors. The first relates to variations in the distinctive structural features of regions that were discussed above. These objective conditions will define the 'opportunities structures' for governors. Here we are interested in a second group of factors that concerns the personal characteristics of a governor. We posit that 'native governors' would be more likely to nominate 'native candidates'. For this measurement of regional 'rootedness' we use three variables:

- The length of tenure of a governor. We use a very simple indicator – 'years'.
- The method by which governors were recruited – Elected or Appointed. Although gubernatorial elections were abolished in 2005, there were still 24 governors in post in December 2011 who had been elected before the cancellation of the elections in 2005. We use a binominal variable: elected governors were coded as '1', all others – as '0'.
- The career background of the governors. As noted above there is a class of Russian governors who may be defined as *Vikings* - these are individuals who were appointed by the Kremlin from other regions or from the Centre. *Vikings* have no connections with the region or roots in the region before their appointment. The opposite class is 'native

governors’ - those who made their careers in the region which they govern. It is logical to suppose that ‘native governors’ will promote ‘native candidates’. A biographical analysis of politicians, who held the post of governor in December 2011, allows us to divide these top officials into two groups: 1) ‘natives’ (52 observations) were coded as ‘1’; 2) *Vikings* (28 observations) were coded as ‘0’.

Analysis and Discussion

Our dependent variable is the share of ‘native candidates’ in UR’s regional lists for the December 2011 *Duma* elections. There are 8 independent variables: the formal constitutional status of a region, the share of federal transfers in regional budgets, three variables of heterogeneity and three variables concerning the features of governors. Since the dependent variable does not accord with normal distribution, we employ an ordinal regression model instead of the OLS regression - and this means that we have to rank the values of the dependent variables:

- 1 – minimal share of ‘native candidates’, that is ‘0’ (6 regions)
- 2 – share of ‘native candidates’ is from 0.01 to 0.25 (no observations)
- 3 – share of ‘native candidates’ is from 0.26 to 0.49 (7 regions)
- 4 – share of ‘native candidates’ is ‘0.5’ (12 regions)
- 5 - share of ‘native candidates’ is from 0.51 to 0.75 (20 regions)
- 6 - share of ‘native candidates’ is from 0.76 to 0.99 (7 regions)
- 7 – maximum share of ‘native candidates’, that is ‘1’ (28 regions)

A number of models of ordinal regression have been employed, and the results are displayed in Table 2. In Model 1, which is a basic model, all the independent variables are included. The analysis confirms the main theoretical expectations concerning the importance of such factors as federative relations and heterogeneity. Two variables - ‘share of federal transfers in the regional budget’ and ‘share of urban populations (deviation)’ have statistical significance

and the highest values of coefficients. Two other variables, which concerns heterogeneity – ‘GRP per capita (deviation)’ and ‘share of ethnic Russians (deviation)’ – are slightly weaker but point in the same direction.

Table 2. Ordinal Regression Models

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Est (St.Er.)	Sig.	Est (St.Er.)	Sig.	Est (St.Er.)	Sig.	Est (St.Er.)	Sig.
Formal status	.322 (.705)	.648			.285 (.705)	.686	.341 (.820)	.677
ShareTtransfers	-3.947 (1.865)	.034	-4.059 (1.842)	.028	-3.356 (2.175)	.123	-4.551 (2.152)	.034
Log GRPpc (DEV)	.650 (.486)	.181	.714 (.477)	.134	.662 (.487)	.174	.936 (.542)	.084
ShareURB (DEV)	6.556 (3.114)	.035	6.639 (3.068)	.030	6.228 (3.209)	.052	12.737 (4.380)	.004
ShareRUS (DEV)	2.378 (2.027)	.241	3.376 (1.698)	.047	2.101 (2.125)	.323	1.148 (2.464)	.641
GOVyear	-.047 (.083)	.570			-.053 (.083)	.402	-.042 (.089)	.631
GOVnative	.256 (.569)	.652			.317 (.576)	.583	.005 (.662)	.994
GOVelected	-.972 (.971)	.317			-1.057 (.981)	.281	-1.318 (1.054)	.211
CandWinPosition					.048 (.081)	.548		
N	78*		78*		78*		68**	
Chi-square	17.614		16.025		17.884		25.676	
Sig.	0.024		0.003		0.037		0.001	
Pseudo-Nagelkerke R2	0.210		0.193		0.213		0.332	
Parallel test	0.260		0		0		.895	
Correlation	.323**		.381**		.361**		.482**	

* Two regions (Khanty-Mansi AO and Yamalo-Nenets AO) are lost due to the lack of data on GRP per capita.

** 10 outliers are excluded.

At the same time, the hypothesis about the formal constitutional status of regions has not been verified. This is not unexpected, as the formal status of a federal unit does not always provide the region with privileges, for example, many of the ethnic republics (e.g., Karelia, Khakasiya) are treated in exactly the same way as the territorially defined regions (*oblasts*).

The insignificance of the personal career background of governors is especially noteworthy. Since all three variables have very low coefficients, the results cannot be considered accidental. Therefore, we can conclude that the success of governors in their efforts to promote ‘native candidates’ depends on the ‘structural’ characteristics of a region, and not the degree of ‘rootedness’ of the governor in the regional elite.

Model 2 is used to test how coefficients change if we omit the non-significant variables. One can see that all of the coefficients increase and this confirms the results of model 1.

Next, we have to take into account the differences between the regional lists and the number of positions, including winning positions. It is possible that this may affect the dependent variable. The more winning positions there are in the regional list, the more opportunities the regional branch has in bargaining with the Party Centre. An increase in the number of winning positions may enhance the share of ‘native candidates’ in the regional lists. However, Model 3 does not confirm this supposition. Adding into the equation the variable ‘number of winning positions’ does not noticeably change the coefficients.

At the same time, the empirical data demonstrates that in different regions the influence of the different explanatory variables will vary significantly. While in some cases the ‘financial autonomy of the regions’ is more important, in others the impact of ‘heterogeneity’ is the most significant.

Our study shows that among the least autonomous UR regional branches are such regions as Tambov and Oryol *oblasts* which are both financially dependent on the Centre. Here the formation of the regional party lists took place under great pressure from the Party Centre. In Tambov *Oblast'*, where the share of federal transfers in regional budgets reached 0.48, UR had two deputies in the Duma in 2007, and this was expected to be the case in 2011. At the top of the regional party list was the Chair of the regional assembly Nikitin, but it was clear that he was a 'locomotive' ('parovoz'), so the following two positions were important. Both of the winning positions were delivered to *Vikings*. Viktor Kidyaev was an incumbent Duma deputy who was very loyal to the Kremlin. He was elected from Mordoviya in 2007 but in 2011, he failed to win a place on the Mordoviya party list and he finally settled in Tambov. Alexander Babakov was a Russian national politician with a scandalous reputation. He was one of the leaders of Just Russia, but on the eve of the 2011 Duma elections he left the party and joined the 'All-Russian People's Front'. As a reward for this switch of parties, UR gave Babakov the opportunity to compete for the top position in any of the regional party lists. First he tried his luck in Perm *Oblast'* and then later in Voronezh *Oblast'*, but to no success. Finally, he was given the number three slot on the Tambov regional party list and was subsequently elected to the Duma. As a result, Tambov *Oblast'* has no 'native' deputies in the Duma.²⁴

Oryol *Oblast'* is also financially dependent on the Federal Government. The share of federal transfers in the regional budget is 0.43. It also had two winning positions in the regional party list. The first was given to Nikolay Kovalev, the former Director of the Federal Security Service, who had been elected to the Duma from Oryol in 2007. Actually only Kovalev was elected

²⁴ <http://www.taminfo.ru/expert/titarenko/14151-partijnye-sezdy-proshli-itogi-dlya-tambovskoj.html>. Accessed, 15 February 2015.

in 2011, since the regional party list won only one mandate. The second slot was given to Roman Antonov, who had been elected to the Duma in 2007 from the Nizhegorod regional party list.²⁵

On the other hand, in fairly financially autonomous regions we can observe the opposite scenario to that which occurred in the economically poorer regions. Here the native candidates have been in the ascendancy. Thus, for example, in Chelyabinsk *Oblast'* (the share of federal transfers in regional budgets is less than 0.20) all 8 winning positions were won by native candidates (although in 2007 2 of the 8 mandates had gone to *Vikings*). In 2011, conversely, even those politicians who were promoted by the Centre (one of the leaders of pro-Kremlin Youth Movement Molodaya Gvardiya Vladimir Burmotov) were 'natives.'²⁶ Sverdlovsk *Oblast'*, which is even more financially autonomous (the share of federal transfers in the regional budget is 0.12), had 9 winning positions, and all of them, except one, were filled by 'native politicians'. The only Viking in the regional list was Otari Arshba, a very influential figure at the highest levels of the Russian Government. In 2003 and 2007 he was elected to the Duma from Kemerovo *Oblast'*.²⁷

In other cases the main factor that increases the autonomy of UR regional branches is heterogeneity. These cases are primarily to be found in the republics of the North Caucasus – Dagestan, Ingushetiya, North Ossetiya, Chechnya. All the winning positions in these regions were filled by native candidates.

Taken as a whole, model 1 demonstrates a fairly high level of explanatory significance. The correlation between actual and predicted values of the dependent variable is '0.323'. Turning to a consideration of the correlation in more detail: it is notable that the actual and predicted values

²⁵ <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2589871>. Accessed 15 February 2015.

²⁶ <http://ura.ru/content/chel/14-09-2011/articles/1036257037.html>. Accessed 15 February 2015.

²⁷ http://uralpolit.ru/news/elections/elections_parties/novye-deputaty-gosdumy-ot-sverdlovskoi-oblasti-kto-uezhaet-v-moskvu. Accessed 15 February 2015.

of the dependent variable coincide in 28 observations. In 17 cases, we have a difference of only one rank, and in 23 cases – two ranks.

Only 10 regions substantially deviate from the common pattern. All these deviations are in one direction, namely, the predicted values of the dependent variable are more than the actual values. The region with the highest deviation is Khakasiya where the predicted share of ‘native candidates’ should be the highest (7 in rank) but in fact none of the ‘native candidates’ were in a winning position. This may be explained by the fact that only one position in the regional list was a winning position, and it was occupied by a *Viking*-incumbent. 6 regions deviated from the predicted values by four ranks. The values of Altay *Krai* and Voronezh *Oblast*’ were predicted as the highest (7), but amongst the candidates less than half of the winning positions were held by ‘native candidates.’ 4 regions were unable to include any ‘native candidates’ in winning positions (rank 1), although more than half (rank 5) were predicted. Although all four of the latter cases are fairly small regions, they had just 1 or 2 winning positions, and all of these were given to *Viking*-incumbents. Finally, in three regions - Karachaevo-Cherkessiya, Murmansk and Orenburg *oblasts* – a maximum rank (7) of ‘native candidates’ on winning position was predicted but only half were ‘native candidates’ (rank 4).

In model 4 we excluded all 10 of the most deviant cases as outliers. One can see that the coefficients that were significant (variables of centralization and heterogeneity) in model 1 became stronger. Those coefficients that were insignificant (variables on formal status and governors’ features) became weaker. The values of the general coefficients (Chi-square and R²) also increased. The correlation between the predicted and the actual values of the dependent variable achieves ‘0.482’. Consequently, model 5 once again confirms our findings.

Conclusion

The institutionalization and nationalisation of Russia's party system, which is dominated by United Russia, has played a major role in the building of Putin's 'power vertical'. Nevertheless, despite the fact that formal relations within United Russia are highly centralized, informal practices allow for far greater degrees of regional autonomy. Focusing on UR's candidate selection for the 2011 Duma election this paper has revealed significant variations in the relations between United Russia's Party Centre and its regional branches.

As electoral legislation requires the segmentation of party lists into "regional groups", the composition of the regional lists, specifically the share of "native candidates", may be considered a good indicator of the level of autonomy of regional branches. Ordinal regression analysis confirms our main theoretical hypotheses. In the more financially autonomous regions, UR's regional branches will have more leverage and bargaining power in their relations with the Party Centre.

Another important factor is heterogeneity: the more a region's demographic, ethnic and socio-economic indicators deviate from the national average, the less likely the region will be dominated by the Party Centre. Such a trend is particularly evident in regions where a majority of the population are non-Russians: this is the case even when the region is financially dependent on the Centre. On the other hand, the financial autonomy of a region has a positive effect on the autonomy of a UR regional branch even when the region does not deviate significantly from the nationwide average. Moreover, there are also some cases (e.g., Bashkortostan and Komi) where both factors (financial autonomy and heterogeneity) have a joint impact.

Another important finding of this study is that the variables which we tested concerning the personal features of governors are not significant. Rather these variations can better be explained by 'objective' structural factors. The personal background may increase motivation, but it does not increase effectiveness. This we would argue is due to the fact that the instigation of Putin's 'power vertical' has rendered the significance of a governor's career background as null

and void. But this does not mean that the governors are mere agents of the Centre. They naturally will have their own interests and they will often express and defend the interest of their regional elites.

Finally, the key conclusions of this study challenge the traditional view of United Russia as a highly centralised and hierarchical party. Formerly the party rules provide for a top-down centralised model of intra-party rule, but *informally* the grass roots leadership has been able to exercise considerable degrees of decision-making autonomy. As we have demonstrated, the percentage of ‘native candidates’ who successfully gained winning positions on regional party lists far outnumbers the percentage of ‘Viking outsiders’ who were imposed on local branches by the Party Centre. The relations between the Centre and the regions are far more complex and varied in scope than that suggested by Putin’s concept - the ‘power vertical’. The Party Centre will often strike compromise deals with its local branches to placate its members and keep regional elites on its side, especially when it comes to elections.

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